Hamlet Arnenian slots the winner to send the Zebras to 2007 Grand Final.

Arnenian continues his rich vein of form.

Take that! Martin shows his delight in the Major Semi-Final on Saturday.

Preston's Zoran Petrevski grabs the consola tion goal for the Lions.

FOXTEL CUP THE FINALS

The Knights are in full voice and can smell the glory days once again at Somers street

Heidelberg coach John Lioupas acclaims the applause of the Berger faithful.

Action from the WPL Minor Semi Final between Sandrinham and Ashburton.

Minor Semi Final action from the clash between the Knights and Cannons.

Bergers are relieved to hear the final whistle, signalling a successive WPL grand Final berth.

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INSIDE THIS WEEK...

Boo, Katsa & Tsigan

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GOAL! WEEKLY

Season 3: Issue 22 Monday 24th September 2007

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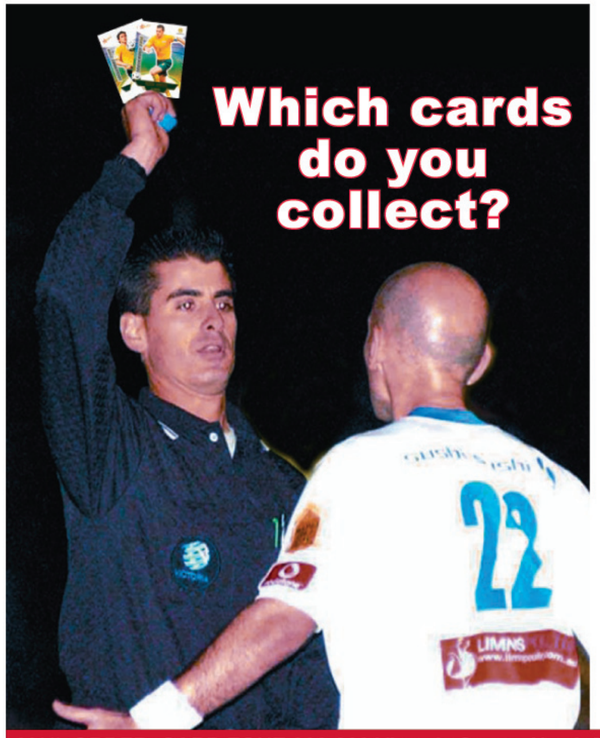

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STUBBORN SYDNEY STANDS TALL

Culina breaks his drought

Patrick's first goal for Sydney FC has handed Branko Culina his maiden Hyundai A-League victory with a 1-0 win over Queensland Roar at Suncorp Stadium.

The Brazilian striker, relegated to the bench after starting the past two matches, tapped home the winner within 60 seconds of his introduction as a second-half substitute for Ufuk Talay.

Sydney coach Branko Culina's positive intent paid dividends with goalkeeper Clint Bolton having kept the visitors in the game to that point, twice denying Roar's Brazilian striker Reinaldo with his second save an outstanding tip over the crossbar after great work from Marcinho.

"Patrick is one of those players that a few weeks ago when he came on against Adelaide made a bit of a difference to us," Culina said afterwards.

"He was able to hold the ball up and we thought we needed to have someone up there who could hold the ball up a little bit more to give our midfield and defence a bit of a breather because it was fair to say we were under the pump."

Queensland enjoyed the lion's share of possession but couldn't find a way past an inspired Sydney defence with Bolton thwarting sub Sasa Ognenovski with a fine fingertip save in the closing stages.

Stand-in skipper Mark Milligan was outstanding as a replacement for club captain Tony Popovic in central defence with Culina, minus marquee signing Juninho, also handing Brendon Santalab his first league start after a succession of injuries.

Santalab's first involvement was when he was scythed down by Danny Tiatto just outside the area but Talay's resulting free-kick went well wide with the sides largely cancelling each other out in an uninspiring opening.

Alex Brosque's miscontrol right in front of the fans which used to adore him was typical of the first 25 minutes before the home side gradually commanded the ascendancy with Simon Lynch and Marcinho finally testing Bolton.

The visiting 'keeper also ensured the teams went into the break all square with a superb reflex parry from Reinaldo after Craig Moore's downward far post header was cleared off the line by Adam Casey.

Culina's half-time team talk helped a reenergised Sydney gain a foothold in the contest with Ruben Zadkovich cutting in easily from the left flank before drilling a shot past a motionless Liam Reddy then Steve Corica teeing up Brosque who failed to connect six yards from goal.

Frank Farina introduced Massimo Murdocca for Ante Milicic just before the hour mark with the diminutive midfielder instantly adding appetite to Queensland's play.

Murdocca found space on the right with his low centre turned away by Mark Rudan with Lynch hovering, then moments later Bolton showed supreme athleticism to tip Reinaldo's point blank header over the bar.

A delighted Culina then celebrated Patrick's 69th minute tap-in, one of the easiest goals the South American import will probably score after Corica's cross found him unmarked in the Roar's six-yard box.

There was still time for Rudan and Reinaldo to head chances over and Bolton to tip Ognenovski's effort around the post but Sydney clung on to move up to fifth on goal difference from the fourth-placed Roar.

"We may as well just stop here and we'll use all your quotes from the Central Coast game," a surprisingly upbeat Farina told reporters referring to the Roar's previous 1-0 home defeat a fortnight ago.

"We could have and should have won the game but we didn't because we didn't finish and it is frustrating."

Queensland Roar FC: 1.Liam REDDY (gk), 4.Craig MOORE, 5.Josh McCLOUGHAN, 9.Simon LYNCH, 10.Ante MILICIC (8.Massimo MURDOCCA 56'), 11.REINALDO (19.Sasa Ognenovski 19'), 14.Ben GRIFFIN (7.Michael ZULLO 72'), 15.Matt McKAY, 16.Hyuk-Su SEO, 18.Danny TIATTO, 23.MARCINHO. Substitutes Not Used: 30.Griffin McMASTER (gk). Yellow Cards: Josh McLoughan 34', Danny Tiatto 46'. Red Cards: Nil

Sydney FC: 1.Clint BOLTON (gk), 2.Iain FYFE, 4.Mark RUDAN, 8.Ruben ZADKOVICH, 10.Steve CORICA, 11.Brendon SANTALAB, 14.Alex BROSQUE, 15.Terry McFLYNN, 16.Mark MILLIGAN, 18.Adam CASEY (21. Adam BIDDLE 53'), 23.Ufuk TALAY (12.PATRICK 67'). Substitutes Not Used: 9.David ZDRILIC, 30.Matthew NASH (gk).
Yellow Cards: Ruben Zadkovich 37', Ufuk Talay 44', Terry McFlynn 66', Brendon Santalab 86'.
Red Cards: Nil

A-LEAGUE STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Central Coast Mariners FC	**5**	**4**	**1**	**0**	**6**	**0**	**6**	**13**
2 Newcastle Jets FC	5	2	3	0	5	3	2	9
3 Melbourne Victory FC	**5**	**0**	**5**	**0**	**5**	**5**	**0**	**5**
4 Queensland Roar FC	5	1	2	2	5	6	-1	5
5 Sydney FC	**5**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**4**	**5**	**-1**	**5**
6 Wellington Phoenix FC	5	1	2	2	6	9	-3	5
7 Adelaide United FC	**5**	**0**	**4**	**1**	**7**	**8**	**-1**	**4**
8 Perth Glory FC	5	0	3	2	1	3	-2	3

NEXT ROUND

Victory v Roar
Friday 28th Sept KO 8pm

Adelaide v Mariners
Sunday 30th Sept KO 4.30pm

Sydney v Jets
Saturday 29th Sept KO 7pm

Phoenix v Glory
Sunday 30th Sept KO 5pm

TOP SCORERS

2- Nathan Burns (AU), Daniel (WP), Bruce Djite (AU), Felipe (WP), Adam Kwasnik (CCM), Matt McKay (QR), Nik Mrdja (CCM), Sasho Petrovski (CCM), Shane Smeltz (WP).

1- Richie Alagich (AU), Daniel Allsopp (MV), Mark Bridge (NJ), Alex Brosque (SFC), Adam Casey (SFC), Adrian Caceres (MV), Diego (AU), Travis Dodd (AU), Adam Griffiths (NJ), Joel Griffiths (NJ), Jamie Harnwell (PG), Josh McLoughan (QR), Kevin Muscat (MV), Stuart Musialik (NJ), Sasa Ognenovski (QR), Patrick (SFC), Reinlaldo (QR), Ufuk Talay (SFC), Archie Thompson (MV), Matt Thompson (NJ), Rodrigo Vargas (MV).

ROUND 5 DETAILS

Newcastle Jets 2
(Adam Griffiths 4', Stuart Musialik 22')
Melbourne Victory 2
(Archie Thompson 65', Adrian Caceres 83')
Friday, 21 September 2007
EnergyAustralia Stadium, Newcastle
Referee: Matthew Breeze
Assistant Referees: Rodney Allen & Murray Wilson
Fourth Official: Strebre Delovski
Crowd: 11,179

Queensland Roar 0
Sydney FC 1
(Patrick 69')
Saturday, 22 September 2007
Suncorp Stadium, Queensland
Referee: Mark Shield
Assistant Referees: Denis Silk & Brad Hobson
Fourth Official: Chris Beath
Crowd: 16,582

Wellington Phoenix 2
(Felipe 64', Shane Smeltz 87')
Adelaide United 2
(Diego 69', Bruce Djite 78')
Saturday, 22 September 2007
Westpac Stadium, Wellington, New Zealand
Referee: Ben Williams
Assistant Referees: Brent Best & Paul Dunham
Fourth Official: Michael Hester
Crowd: 12,127

Central Coast Mariners 1
(Sasho Petrovski 80')
Perth Glory 0
Sunday, 23 September 2007
Bluetongue Stadium, Gosford
Referee: Craig Zetter
Assistant Referees: Ben Wilson & Gavin Martin
Fourth Official: James Lewis
Crowd: 9,274

Hyundai A-League 2007/08 – Crowd Figures

Club	Home Games	Ave.	Low	High	Total
Adelaide United	1	12,231	12,231	12,231	12,231
CC Mariners	1	19,052	9,052	9,052	9,052
Melbourne Victory	2	29,448	27,351	31,545	58,896
Newcastle Jets	2	13,386	13,144	13,627	26,771
Perth Glory	3	7,908	7,203	8,508	23,725
Queensland Roar	2	12,822	8,815	16,828	25,643
Sydney FC	3	14,727	11,491	18,457	44,181
Phoenix	2	12,950	11,478	14,421	25,899
Total	16	14,150	7,203	31,545	226,398

GOAL! WEEKLY

This week's line-up

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NEWCASTLE JETS 2 - 2 MELBOURNE VICTORY

By Damian Souness
Ratings by Carlos Ibarra

BACK FROM THE DEAD!

Caceres snatches late equaliser to maintain unbeaten start

Melbourne Victory has produced a remarkable display of strength and character, pulling back a two goal deficit to record a 2-2 draw against the second placed Newcastle Jets at EnergyAustralia Stadium.

It was a performance that embodied the spirit and determination of Victory as second half goals from Archie Thompson and late substitute Adrian Caceres silenced the Jets, who took an early advantage through Adam Griffiths and Stuart Musalik.

Goalkeeper Michael Theoklitos was outstanding for Victory, making a number of influential saves throughout the match, including one from former Brazilian international Mario Jardel that would've given Newcastle the lead in the dying stages.

Leandro Love, who replaced the injured Danny Allsopp, was also a notable performer for Victory, with the young Brazilian creating a number of forward prospects, which included a pass to Thompson for the visitors' first goal.

With Leandro up front for Victory and Denni starting for Newcas tle, it was expected to be a battle of the Brazilian strikers; however Jets defender Adam Griffiths changed that with a startling fifth minute goal.

A corner kick from Adam D'Apuzzo found its way to Andrew Durrante in the penalty area, allowing the Newcastle defender to turn and lob a pinpoint ball into the path of Adam Griffiths, who launched a shot from pointblank range.

Joel Griffiths looked to continue the Jets' exciting start and came close when Durrante played a through ball to the attacking midfielder, but Theoklitos was up to the challenge and denied the shot on goal.

Victory looked to settle and work its way into the match with Leigh Broxham, Archie Thompson and Leandro all pushing forward, but former Qantas Socceroos goalkeeper Ante Covic stood tall for Newcastle.

Joseph Keenan, in his return from a hamstring injury, and Thompson provided further chances for Victory, but couldn't manage to break through the sturdy Newcastle defence, which was spurred on by a parochi al crowd of 11,179.

The Newcastle fans were soon on their feet as Musalik delivered a stunning strike from outside the penalty area to double the Jets' lead after 21 minutes.

The Qantas Under 23 midfielder gained possession of the ball on the right flank and made a 15 metre dash, before slamming a long distance shot past a diving Theoklitos.

Joel Griffiths was continuously vigorous in midfield for Newcastle and looked to extend the Jets' lead before half time, but Victory resisted and began to show positive signs ahead of a second half fight back.

Keenan was replaced by Costa Rican international Carlos Hernandez following the half time break as Victory amplified its strike force in search of an opening goal.

The Jets can't believe they've threw away a two goal lead after the Victory produced a remarkable second half performance to avoid defeat.

Mark Bridge looked to repeat Musalik's long distance effort for Newcastle, before Broxham tested Covic with a shot of his own from outside the box at the other end.

Broxham was amongst the action again when he played a ball behind the Newcastle defence to Leandro; it was too quick for the striker, but was a significant step as Victory began to mount an exciting comeback.

Thompson produced the goods for Victory and registered his first goal of the new season when he headed home a Leandro cross from the left flank in the 65th minute.

Theoklitos continued to thwart the Jets attempts on goal, while Leandro almost equalised when he worked his way around the Newcastle defence before delivering a shot that was put away for a corner kick.

Rodrigo Vargas struck the subsequent set piece wide as Victory began to loo k increasingly dangerous.

Theoklitos made a telling save soon after when Bridge and Joel Griffiths stripped the Victory defence and made a brake forward, but the Jets pair couldn't put the ball past the resilient goalkeeper.

Caceres was brought on in the 79th minute and gave Victory a further attacking option, before Newcastle welcomed Jardel as a replacement for the injured Troy Hearfield.

Caceres proved his worth after just four minutes on the pitch with a stunning solo effort that saw him weave past Adam Griffiths, before finding the back of the net to the delight of the small traveling contingent of Victory supporters.

Jardel almost saved the Jets with a late header on target that was saved by Theoklitos, before Brebner looked to give Victory a dramatic win with a powerful shot from long distance.

Both teams pushed hard in the dying stages, but neither could break through as the match came to a close and Victory recorded one of its most memorable and noteworthy performances.

Victory will now focus on kicking off a massive sporting weekend in Melbourne when it takes on Queensland Roar at Telstra Dome next Friday (kick off 8pm), before the AFL Grand Final on Saturday and the NRL Grand Final on Sunday.

Newcastle Jets 2 (Adam Griffiths 5', Stuart Musalik 21')
Melbourne Victory 2 (Archie Thompson 65', Adrian Caceres 83')
Friday, 21 September 2007
EnergyAustralia Stadium, Newcastle
Referee: Matthew BREEZE
Crowd: 11,179

Melbourne Victory: 1.Michael THEOKLITOS (gk), 2.Kevin MUSCAT (Captain), 3.Daniel PIORKOWSKI, 6.Steve PANTELIDIS (14. Adrian CACERES 79'), 7.Matthew KEMP (21. Sebastian RYALL 72'), 8.Grant BREBNER, 10.Archie THOMPSON, 11.Joseph KEENAN (16.Carlos HERNANDEZ 46'), 12.Rodrigo VARGAS, 15.Leandro LOVE, 18.Leigh BROXHAM

Yellow cards: Steve Pantelidis 41'

For all other A-league details please turn to page 18-19

MELBOURNE VICTORY PLAYER RATINGS

Michael Theoklitos: 8/10 Was on his game yet again. Spared Melbourne from an embarrassing loss and although he conceded twice, both goals were defensive errors where he couldn't do much about.

Kevin Muscat: 5/10 Failed to impose himself in the game, opting for butchery against his faster opponents. Hesitated in crucial moments of the game and lacked authority.

Daniel Piorkowski: 6/10 Had a bad start to the match but got better as the game went on. Can be congratulated for playing on after being ravaged by Theoklitos.

Steve Pantalidis: 6/10 Earned his keep but didn't link up well with the rest of the backline.

Matthew Kemp: 2/10 Poor performance, bad passing never really found his feet and should have been subbed off earlier.

Grant Brebner: 4/10 Has seen better days and severely lacks the eye of the tiger. Was virtually absent on field and should have made way for fresh legs at half time.

Archie Thompson: 7/10 Had a quiet game but came through when it counted.

Joseph Keenan: 4/10 Was regularly exposed and his side was clearly the weakest link in the chain.

Rodrigo Vargas: 6/10 Struggled to get into the match and order the defence like he is known for doing. However he proved how handy he can be on the cross.

Leandro Love: 7/10 Did well considering the expectation. Committed various mistakes but redeemed himself by providing the cross for the first goal.

Leigh Broxham 5/10 Showed glimpses of all the hype behind him but his passes lacked accuracy.

Adrian Caceres: 8/10 Match turner, impacted the game and scored on entry. Only question is why he didn't come on earlier!

Sebastian Ryall: 6/10 Did his job and managed to slot in well in a troubled defence. Raised doubts on Keenan's first team status.

Carlos Hernandez: 4/10 Still unfit and proves to be incredibly slow on the ball. His long strikes didn't come off but gets some credit for vision.

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By Simon Chiarelli

TIME'S UP FOR AUSSIE ARNIE

Arnold takes a parting shot from departing Socceroo hot-seat

Outgoing national coach Graham Arnold slammed critics of his leadership after bowing out of the job in admirable fashion during the Socceroos 1-0 loss to Argentina.

Arnold claimed he was a victim of the "cultural cringe" and that he was only criticised during his tenure as caretaker boss because of his nationality.

"I only received flak because I was Australian, at the end of the day," he said. "I got support from the players but not from the critics. I'm Australian, and they just want to hammer Australian coaches.

"I've worked in international football for seven years, and Australia makes and develops good coaches, but some people think because we are Australian we don't belong here."

Arnold also dismissed suggestions he lost the confidence of the FFA board, reserving special praise for Chairman Frank Lowy.

"Frank Lowy and the board have been extremely supportive of me and what I've been doing, even when there have been hiccups because they know how difficult Asia is," he said.

"People ask me if I'm sad (I'm leaving the position). I'm not sad, I'm extremely happy because I've had a chairman and a CEO who have been honest with me the whole way and I knew this day was coming.

After taking over from Guus Hiddink in July last year, Arnold seemingly struggled to make an impact results-wise, enjoying only modest success as he secured four wins in nine outings prior to the Asian Cup.

As speculation swirled surrounding possible candidates for the role, his slim chances of securing the top job full-time hinged on Australia's performance during that tournament.

But after a questionable preparation, marred by claims the Socceroo squad had been struck by spates of player infighting, his fragile grip on the position was torn from his hands in emphatic fashion by a united and resolute Iraqi side.

The former NAC Breda star admitted the tournament was his only regret from his time at the helm of the team, leaving a stern warning of the tribulations faced by the Socceroos as they continue their journey across the Asian continent.

"The biggest hiccup I had obviously was with the Asian Cup but my question always was and goes back to how do you prepare for a tournament you've never played in before?," he said.

How do you prepare for conditions you've never played in before? How do the players prepare for that? These are all answers I have now, but before the Asian Cup I didn't have those answers." he said.

"It took the Oman and Iraq bad days to make the players realise that Asia is not easy," he said. "It is going to be a tough road, a lot of you journos were there and saw the conditions but you haven't been to the Middle-East yet, and let me tell you, that is worse."

Although he will now return to his previous role as Olyroos coach, Arnold emphasised his determination to remain involved with the senior team as an assistant to the new coach.

"I'm here to help, to be here for the game, I understand all the players who play in Europe because I played there myself. I understand the difficulties, the mentality of it all and what it is like to do the travel.

"For whoever does come in, I understand the Australian mentality and the culture, like when I was with Hiddink, I was able to give him all that information because whoever comes in needs that information."

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

Coulda, woulda, shoulda? Graham Arnold takes a moment to ponder on his future as the final whistle between Australia versus Argentina signaled the end of his role as Socceroo coach. The position will most likely see Dick Advocat prepare the squad for the assault on World Cup qualification.

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TSIGAN'S TSIGAR

THE TWO WEEK ETERNITY

It certainly gets that way at this time of the year.
Players licking their wounds and going hammer and tong to recover in time for a crack next week. Oh no, here we again. That 7 day wait for an aneurism. For the early entrants, a 14 day wait for a chance to look back one day in time, and reflect on what was or what could've been. Some of us have been there. There are those of us who wished we were there. Pink Floyd wrote a song about it and it has stood the test of time as far as standing time is concerned, and it's not very concerned at this point in time.

Bureaucrats will hopefully get their heads lopped off after the VPL and WPL Grand Final, with an estimated attendance of under 1500 forecasted if sunny Preston stays cloudy. Where did it go off the boil? If you're not a "die-hard" supporter of a particular team, then what's the attraction of attending a GF without your team to support?
To watch a great, entertaining, champagne football standard game, and be enthralled and dazzled by humorless players who lack character and personality, but sport ridiculous haircuts and listen to their ipods whilst juggling their balls…hmmm, 'tis not mein cuppa.

PESSARY PESSIMISM

The legendary icon of Victorian Aussie Rule, Sir Teddy Whitten once quoth, "STUCK IT RIGHT UP 'EM!" If our code had that sort of passion, I could understand the notion of de-ethnicizing and alternatively Australianizing, "soccer". If we are going to continue the trend of attaching a Kangaroo logo or term on our National team (ie: Socceroos), then we are never going to be taken seriously as an International team, and as a result, be continually lambasted as a "sheila's code". Joey's? Matilda's?
Since WHEN was a Kangaroo green and/or gold? Has BRAZIL got a flippin' or hoppin' National Team animal? Why aren't they called the "Amazonians"? Heck, call 'em the Piranha's! Italy is nicknamed the "Azzuri". That's not a name for a sausage. The Australian Cricket Team has the "baggy green". They're not nicknamed after any Bull Mastiff cross Steroids.

This will only take a minute.
Now, take a deep breath...

HACKNEYED

Gee I would've made a great Scotsman. An average Geordie, and perhaps in the bronze position, a subversive but intellectually enhanced Yamabuchi.
Sat back and watched the NRL Final between the Storm and Eels, and heard more clichéd kaka, than a MMM AFL round-up. 99% of it was spewing forth from the "Corporate Boxes".
"Could go either way."
"It's so important to get the points on the board."
"End to end stuff."

Midway through the 2nd Half, this banter had turned to slop and drivel.
"Arrrghreffffff….what game yooou watching maaaaate!!!"
"He's bin doin' it ALL DAY!!!"
"GEDUPP YA WAYNKAH!"
So glad I decided not to bring the chitluns and expose them to the cream of 'Straylian vernacular. I'll wait for Boxing Day at the G for that.

BY A NOSE

The 2c question is, "Should we return to a 1st past the post League?" This Tsigan sayeth yea verily. The notion that it is Australian to have a finals system should never apply to the round ball code. What a milking of time stirred with a dollop of space. Fancy a team finishing on top of the League, and then being labeled the "Minor Premiers". As if 26 to 30 games wasn't enough to warrant a Premiership Title accolade. No, they have to play the Gypsy Kings without Bamboleo, and succumb to a "choker's" label if they don't win the Grand Final. A Grand Final should be endorsed in a Cup knockout system, and not a year appraisal of your efforts and intoxication.

It's about the two M's - movement and positioning. If there's one word to say at half time, it's concentrate and focus. Bald people should not be called "slapheads", even though as a child you grew up on Benny Hill and Kojak. A minnow is not an anchovy. Fancy ordering a Capricciosa with extra minnow's. Grinding out results is not done on a dancefloor at 3am with the local ho ho ho. Melons are eaten, not ogled and if you happen to catch a cold, for goodness sake throw it in the bin, don't show or hand it over to your mate. David Seaman was one bloke, not a troop of Navy Seals at the Blue Oyster Bar dancing a jig. Backgammon is not a type of Greek food or intimate encounter. Games are not won until they are lost.
Which one of those was editio cum notis variorum?
Send your answer and life's savings to:

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POST SCRIPTUS

The drawing board must be getting a workout from the sycophants. Will the Cannons fire their own broadside next year? Will the soccer moms be able to scrounge up the moolie to build the Oaks up from this year's under-achievement? The Georgies and Royals are preparing to do battle in Supreme Court against the FFV. Thankfully Judge Judy will be presiding, and XXX will be Security.
Cleopatra was Greek, not Egyptian. She just hung out in Giza for a bit of Roman Toga action. Hail Ceaser and all that jazz.

BOO'S WORLD

A satirical look at the World of Football according to Mark Boric

Big meeting this week when Ernie Merrick and Gary Cole speak to Chris Judd and his agent about a move to Melbourne Victory. Geoff Lord has told them the Victory should be in the mix with the other big Melbourne clubs seeking to bring the West Coast Eagles star home, and a large offer will be tabled.

Speaking of Melbourne Victory, they have more draws than Tattslotto. They should give the FFV some advice, as that organisation will no doubt be struggling to release the draws for the 2008 season well into March by my reckoning.

Plenty of excitement about the Matilda's this week, the most perhaps since the nude calendar of 1999. They had a great come from behind draw with Canada to progress to the second round of the World Cup, where they will meet Brazil.

Jose Mourinho is out of a job. Don't feel too sorry for him though, I'm sure his payout would be more than the average Aussie dole office hands out each week.

Whittlesea Zebras are the first team into the 2007 Foxtel Cup Grand Final. The top two on the ladder in the AFL made their way to the Grand Final, and the same may happen in the NRL if the Storm beat Parramatta, but the margin for error is tighter in our code where it seems the minor premiers struggle to win the Grand Finals.

Plenty Valley Lions lost 1-3 to Lalor in a game which was finally played when the goalposts remained erect and the match officials turned up, two things you wouldn't expect to be so difficult.

The story is starting to come out about Craig Foster's stint in a Tahitian jail. Saved from a Midnight Express-style nightmare by Graham Arnold, he has hardly repaid the man with flattering media coverage in the last few years, has he?

Leeds United have put their points deduction behind them with seven wins from seven games taking them out of the relegation zone. On that form, they should have been deducted more points to make the promotion race more interesting.

Possibly a sight to see at the VPL Gold Medal Night?

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Katsa's Korner

With George Katsamboukas

8-26 Declared

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Nothing beats Friday Night Football

Ducted Heater on full blast, J Walker and WN Filed at the ready, and Smiths Crisps to keep the hunger pains down. All that was needed now was a good game to watch on the Plasma.

Enter Ernie Merricks Melbourne Victory, who flew to the Steel City to play the Jets. This was my first look at Ernie's Championship Team this year; thankfully the Pies and the Cats were doing battle at the same time, as what I saw far from impressed me. Victory's first half effort was about as effective as my speech to an Alcoholics Anonymous Group.

Speaking of alcohol, Ernie's stress level had increased so much during the first half that I called the Local Newcastle Bottle Shop to see if they would deliver to Ernie a bottle of J Walker, so a to take the edge of just a touch.

They refused; no assistance to opposition teams was their official line.
The only 2 real highlights of this game were, and in no particular order.

1. The undercover "Stingers" Camera shot of the Victory Rooms after half time, up pops Victory's Joe Keenan who Ernie had just dragged," picking" A winner, with one hand, and sending an SMS with the other.

2. The athletic frame of the Jet's Mario Jardel, seeing him reminded me of my twilight playing years, only difference was that I wasn't getting paid 5 gorillas a game!

Katsa's final word on this game.
90 Minutes
90 Scotches
90 Yawns!

Jabba the Jet

Over to the local scene we go...

The Green Gully Cavaliers were the second team to visit the Westgate, after losing their elimination match against Whittlesea, who have been the surprise packet of the Vodafone Cup in the second round.

Gully's Ian "Dobbo" Dobson certainly talked up his teams chances pre match, after the Sad End result his team had the week before against the Stallions, unfortunately talk is cheap, it's results that count.

Stop Press: Whittlesea continue their great run, knocking over Goran "Yellow Puma King Boots" Lozanovski's Preston Lions.

Over to Darebin we go and to FFV Headquarters. All clear this week Mark, no issues to report. I have been asked many times, why the fascination with the FFV

Simple answer, the Punters out there are far from content with the way the game is heading in Victoria.

PS Please do not shoot the messenger!

Jose Murinho and Chelsea re no longer an item.The "Special One" packed up his gear and Razor Blade that hardly got used, and has left the building.

Will be interesting to see where he ends up, and who will replace him.
Our own Guus is tipped to get the gig, he has strong ties with Abranovich, time will tell.

The Vodafone Cup has also had many "Special Ones" over the years that have packed up their Buffalo Sports Bags, Covo Managers Jackets, Clip Boards, and Permanent Marker Pens, and made the long trek to their vehicles after being told by the Club El Supremos, don't come Monday.

Question for the "Special Ones"

Next time you go to your wardrobe to pull out the Managers Jacket that your current club has given you to wear, take a peek as to how many other ex Club Jackets you find there. Some of you will be unpleasantly surprised.

Oh I almost forgot, the "Special Ones" also carry with them an Apprentice "Special One" in the form of an Assistant Coach, who assists the "Special One" at whichever club he gets a gig at.

This is known as the Headlight Tail Light phenomenon.

Some more word association:

Disposable Income – Income received from Full time job topped up by earning $$$ to play Soccer in front of 78 people.

Sad End- Paying $300,000 in player wages to win the Vodafone Cup, and a Man In Black gets a penalty decision all wrong in a finals match.

Westgate Bridge – Where one goes immediately after the above occurs.

This is Katsa – Just as you've known him.

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FOXTEL CUP FINAL STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Preston Lions	26	14	9	3	44	26	48
Melbourne Knights	26	14	5	7	38	21	47
Whittlesea Zebras	26	14	5	7	35	28	47
Altona Magic	26	13	7	6	34	24	46
Oakleigh Cannons	26	13	5	8	47	33	44
Green Gully Cavaliers	26	11	7	8	37	28	40
South Melbourne	26	10	7	9	39	33	37
Heidelberg Utd	26	10	7	9	32	37	37
Western Suburbs	26	8	11	7	27	25	35
Richmond	26	10	4	12	44	32	34
Fawkner Blues	26	9	6	11	26	28	33
A.I.S	26	10	2	14	33	35	32
Essendon Royals (R)	26	8	7	11	30	35	31
Sunshine Georgies(R)	26	7	8	11	23	38	29
Kingston City (R)	26	7	6	13	32	38	27
Springvale White Eagles (R)	26	1	2	23	17	77	5

TOP SIX SERIES

Week 1

ELIMINATION FINAL 2
Altona Magic 0
Oakleigh Cannon 1

ELIMINATION FINAL 1
Whittlesea Zebras 2
Green Gully Cavaliers 1

QUALIFYING FINAL
Preston Lions 1
Melbourne Knights 0

Week 2

Major Semi-Final
Whittlesea Zebras 2
Preston Lions 1
(Zebras into Grand Final, Lions into Preliminary Final)

Minor Semi-Final
Melbourne Knights 1
Oakleigh Cannons 0
(Knights into Preliminary Final, Cannons eliminated)

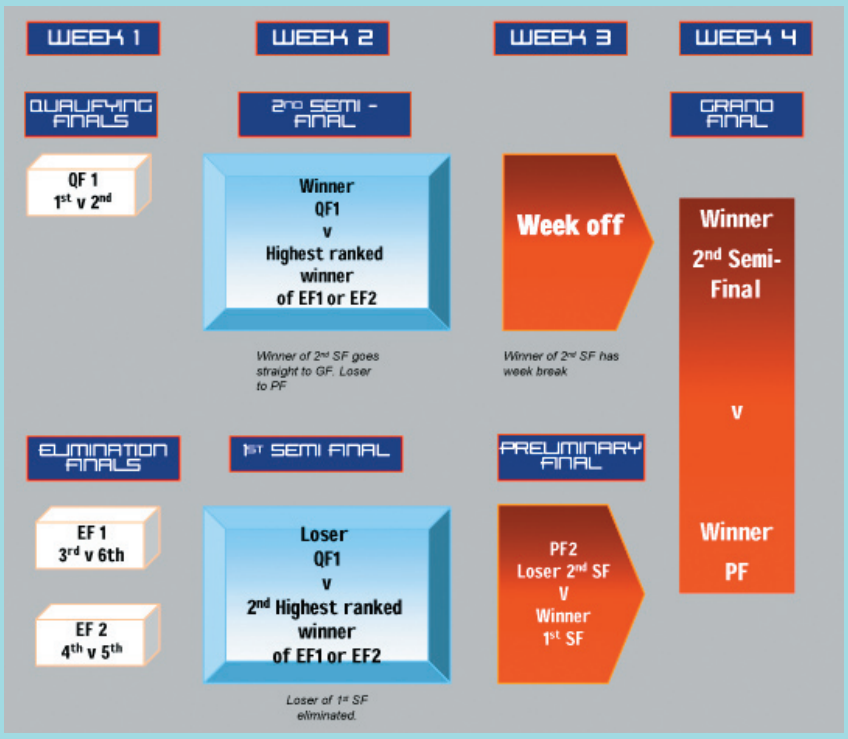
Week 3

Preliminary Final
Lions v Knights
Sunday 30th September
(Winner into Grand Final, loser eliminated)

WEEK 4

Grand Final
Whittlesea Zebras v
Winner of Preliminary Final
Sunday 7th October

FINALS FORMAT



THE TOP MARKSMEN

Player, Club	Goals
Masi, Esala Oakleigh Cannons FC	15
Curcija, Michael Altona Magic SC	12
Nilo, Juan Oakleigh Cannons FC	12
Pelikan, Anthony Melbourne Knights	12

TOP SIX SERIES

FOXTEL CUP PRELIMINARY FINAL

PRESTON LIONS v MELBOURNE KNIGHTS
Sunday 30th Sept
Bob Jane Stadium
KO 3PM

FOXTEL CUP WPL PRELIMINARY FINAL

BOX HILL INTER v ASHBURTON
Sunday 30th Sept
Bob Jane Stadium
KO 3PM

Please check www.footballfedvic.com.au for confirmation of all VPL Top Six Fixture Details

Minor Semi-Final

ASHBURTON

2 - 2

SANDRINGHAM

AET
(Ashburton win 3-1 on penalties)

By George Egonidis
Photos by Daniel Flis

ASHY VICTORIOUS OVER GALLANT SANDY

Penalties needed to determine winner

Ashburton advanced to its second Preliminary Final berth in as many years after a nailbiting penalty shootout win over a gallant Sandringham at Bob Jane Stadium on Sunday.

Scores were locked at 2-2 at the end of normal time and, with neither side able to find the net in extra time, the result came down to a shootout where Ashburton goalkeeper Antoinette Michail saved two Sandringham spot kicks to see her side through.

The result sees Sandringham eliminated from its first WPL finals campaign but it can nonetheless take many positives from a game where it displayed enormous spirit to fight back from two goals down, sending the match into extra time.

In a goalless first half, it was Ashburton which had the game's first real chance when Stacey Louras was unable to capitalise on a deflection off a Sandringham defender – goalkeeper Peta Horman getting down well to block the midfielder's low drive.

Christie Parton then affected an important interception for Sandringham as Seyma Erenli tried to pick out an unmarked Annabelle Gibney after a fast break down the right.

Sarah White came close to opening the scoring for Sandringham when played in on goal by Michelle Parton, but Michail closed her down quickly, forcing her hurried shot wide.

Gibney then blazed over the bar after latching onto a headed flick-on from Tal Karp's well-weighted corner.

The best chance of the first half fell to the lively Jocelyn Murdoch moments before the interval, when the Sandringham striker outmuscled two markers to find herself one-on-one with Michail. But the Ashburton custodian was up to the task, getting enough on the block to send the ball round the post for a corner.

Sandringham looked to have the advantage going in at half time with scores level and the wind at its back when play resumed.

But Ashburton showed its class with two quick goals inside the first 10 minutes of the second stanza to set Sandringham back on its heels.

Kristin Stensholt and Erenli combined to set up the first, which Gibney finished with aplomb over the advancing Horman.

And moments later, Louras collected Rosey Mortellaros' incisive ball, cut inside two defenders and finished truly to double the advantage.

Sandringham was handed a lifeline when Lucy Kapusta's strike was handled inside the area, earning a spot kick which was duly converted by Ashlee Good to pull the score back to 2-1.

The Ashburton girls prevail after an absorbing contest and now meet Box Hill Inter in the WPL Preliminary Final.

Sandringham went close but it wasn't to be on this occassion.

And Sandringham was level shortly afterwards when Murdoch cut inside Letizia Sammut on the touchline, wheeled onto her left foot, and fired home a screamer from outside the penalty area which lodged in the top left corner of the net.

With extra time looming, Stensholt had a chance to win it in normal time for Ashburton when she connected at full stretch with a dangerous Gulcan Koca cross. But Horman did superbly to knock down and then gather the goalbound shot.

Ashburton looked the more likely to take the game in added time, dominating possession and pinning the tiring Sandringham into its own half.

But it all came down to the shootout, where Michail was the hero, saving off Good and Kelly Eaton, and watching Sian Rogers' strike hit the bar to give Ashburton a 3-1 win on penalties.

ResultsVault football
Visit http://football.resultsvault.com for football results and statistics

Major Semi-Final

PRESTON LIONS

1 - 2

WHITTLESEA ZEBRAS

By Chris Chapman
Photos by Daniel Flis

ZEBRAS BOOK GRAND FINAL BERTH

Whittlesea cause upset over Minor Premiers in titanic tussle

The Whittlesea Zebras have booked themselves a place in the 2007 Foxtel Cup Grand Final having won by a margin of two goals to one over the Preston Lions in the 2nd Semi Final on Saturday afternoon. The Whittlesea goals came from the boots of Steve Martin and Hamlet Armenian while Zoran Petrevski scored the only goal for the Lions.

The games opening goal came in just the tenth minute with a wonderful strike from Steve Martin. The Zebras had won a corner which was played long to the far post by Martin and headed back into the danger zone by Hamlet Armenian. Savas Ozdemir was quick to leave his line and punched the ball clear of the pack of players swarming around the penalty spot. However, Ozdemir's clearance went only as far as Steve Martin who hit the bouncing ball with his left foot through heavy traffic and passed the gloves of the diving keeper.

Both teams found an early rhythm and pace to their play which resulted in a highly entertaining brand of football that was appreciated by the large and vocal crowd. It was only a matter of time before the next goal would come but which team would be the scorer was anyone's guess.

It proved to be Preston who equalised in the twenty fourth minute in somewhat fortuitous circumstances when Zoran Petrevski scored from point blank range following a defensive error from the Zebras. Tony Sterjovski had made sizeable inroads down the left hand flank and fired in a speculative shot from a tight angle that stayed low throughout its journey towards the Whittlesea 'keeper Ken Gerohristodoulou. What should have been a textbook save from Gerohristodoulou became an absolute howler with the Zebras number one spilling the ball to the feet of Petrevski who slammed the ball into the back of the net bringing the scores to one goal a piece.

But just five minutes later the Zebras once again took the lead in the decisive finals fixture, this time from the boot of the nippy striker Hamlet Armenian. The sequence of passes that led to the goal were of the highest order as a nice little one two between James Sherman and Tex Apostolikas allowed the Zebras to unlock the Preston defence. Moving at great speed Sherman played the deftest of through balls into space in front of goal that Armenian burst into and calmly slotted the ball passed the outstretched Preston goalkeeper.

The second half was all about the dominance of the Lions but also their inability to translate that forward pressure into goals.

Steve Martin opens the scoring for the Zebras against the Lions in the Major Semi Final on Saturday. Whittlesea books itself a Grand Final berth for Sunday 7th October, while Preston now jousts with the Knights next weekend.

Johnny Sapazovski had the best of these chances but missed his clear cut opportunity on goal in the fifty eighth minute that would have brought the game alive once more. Tony Sterjovski had delivered a beautiful cross from the left wing that found Sapazovski unmarked inside the penalty area. But his headed attempt went straight into the arms of Apostolikas in what was a big let off for the Zebras.

The Preston Lions proceeded to dominate possession for the remainder of the match but could not break down the resilient Whittlesea defence who had battled all day against relentless pressure from the Lions.

What had been a gem of a match finally came to an end after ninety three minutes of time played with the scores standing at two goals to one in favour of the Zebras.

The Zebras' boss Peter Ollerton was quick to praise the resilience and spirit of his chargers. Ollerton said, "There's no superstars in this team. Everyone just puts on the shirt and gives a 100%. You can go a long way with spirit."

Preston coach Goran Lozanovski was disappointed in the result but was also quick to acknowledge the performance of the Whittlesea team. "Credit to Whittlesea, they've had a very consistent last few months and scored a couple of great goals here today."

Major Semi-Final Details:

Preston Lions 1
(Petrevski 23')

Whittlesea Zebras 2
(Martin 10' Armenian 28').

Crowd: 2,500

Line Ups:

Preston Lions: S Ozdemir (gk), J Munoz, L Anastasiou, S Pir (N Lazarevski 65'), T Sterjovski, P Siveski (c), M Gasparis, Z Petrevski, J Sapazovski (I Arsovski 79'), B Georgioski, S Pace.

Unused subs: A Stojanovski, M Miskas, S Masalkovski. Cautions: T Sterjovski, Z Petrevski.

Cautions: None.

Whittlesea Zebras: K Gerohristodoulou (gk), R Antoniadis (c), K Rees, A Drakos, M Pistininzi, J Kozic (E Vassiliadis 48'), G Lombardo, J Sherman, S Martin, T Apostolikas (S Drakos 77'), H Armenian (D Piemonte 89').

Unused subs: D Di Napoli, S Lamanda.

Cautions: H Armenian.

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Major Semi-Final

HEIDELBERG UNITED 1 - 0 BOX HILL INTER

BERGERS THROUGH TO WPL GRAND FINAL

Groenewald knicks it in extra time

By George Egonidis
Photos by Daniel Flis

Heidelberg United is through to its second successive Grand Final after Sarah Groenewald's last minute extra-time winner sunk defending premier Box Hill Inter at Epping Stadium on Saturday.

In a game of several missed chances for both sides, Groenewald held her nerve with little more than 30 seconds left on the clock to fire home the only goal of the day and give her side the week's rest before the season decider.

And after being pushed to extra time in both its finals so far, Inter must now regroup ahead of next weekend's Preliminary Final if it is to have any chance of defending its crown.

Heidelberg started the better of the two sides, Belinda Pannella getting in behind the Box Hill defence early on but firing straight at goalkeeper Helen Klerides.

Groenewald then dragged a shot wide of Klerides' upright before Megan Archer cleared the bar with a long-range free kick.

The 'Bergers were dominating possession, and were it not for their wasteful finishing they could have had the game wrapped up by half time.

On the half hour, Pannella stung the palms of Klerides with a rasping close-range shot and Melissa Frankcombe squandered a golden opportunity after being teed up by Lucy Balta.

Balta then failed to finish from inside the six-yard box and Groenewald missed the target after doing all the hard work to wrong-foot the Inter defence.

Box Hill emerged after the interval ready to take the game up to its opponent, winning a succession of corners in the first 10 minutes as it finally pressed United into its own half.

But it too was guilty of poor execution in front of goal.

On 55 minutes, Kat Smith could not keep her shot down after Amanda Lawless had fired in a dangerous low cross.

And moments later, Smith's lunging first-time volley was also wide of the mark after Louisa Bisby had picked her out at the back post.

Box Hill looked to tire as the game wore on – perhaps a hangover of last week's extra time victory over Ashburton – as Heidelberg once again assumed control of the game.

With extra time looking inevitable, both sides had opportunities to clinch the win in normal time; Heleena Alatsas flashed a header across goal for Heidelberg while Jess Humble had claims for a penalty turned down after she looked to be brought down from behind as she ran in on goal.

Into added time the action continued to swing from end to end with good chances falling to Bisby for Inter and Groenewald for the 'Bergers.

But at the death, it was Groenewald who was the hero, crisply finishing Archer's long ball just as the game looked destined to go to penalties.

Heidelberg United coach John Lioupas joins in on the celebrations with jubilant fans and players after his side clinch a second successive WPL Grand Final appearance.

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Minor Semi-Final

OAKLEIGH CANNONS 0 - 1 MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

PELIKAN SENDS FORMER MATES PACKING

Knights advance to clash with old foes

By Mark Boric
Photos by Daniel Flis

The sun greeted Melbourne Knights and Oakleigh Cannons as their seasons were put on the line in the Foxtel Cup First Semi-Final at Bob Jane Stadium. For the loser it would be the start of the off season, for the winner a date with Preston Lions for a chance at Grand Final glory the following weeks.

Like the weather, Oakleigh began brightly, and in just the second minute Juan Nilo forced a save from Adrian Cagalj after being played in by Michael Panopoulos, which was followed by Bill Damianos putting the rebound over the crossbar.

In the sixth minute a sharp shot on the turn by Daniel Visevic forced an easy save from Michael Turnbull at the Lake End to which the Knights were attacking. Visevic was heavily involved in the action a minute later, when a throw-in to him cleared Scott Webster and bounced over Marcus Stergiopoulos, allowing him to burst away down the right wing. Visevic beat Felix Rosman on the edge of the area and then found Alex Kiratzoglu who had his shot saved.

Steve Iosifids was booked for a foul on Scot MacNicol after the Cannons midfielder had beaten him on the touchline in the fifteenth minute. Shortly after Damianos broke free in the middle, paying the ball to Nilo on his right who put in a cross to the far post which just eluded Esala Masi. Damianos sent in a free-kick after twenty minutes which Nilo flicked on to Panopoulos who headed the ball over the bar. Oakleigh were showing signs of getting on top of play, and a minute later a cross from MacNicol was cleared away from Panopoulos as he arrived at the far post.

The Knights soon regained the ascendancy, and felt aggrieved when a foul on Craig Elvin saw the referee not give the advantage to them when Joe Spiteri and Visevic looked like breaking away from the Oakleigh defence. Visevic robbed Panopoulos of the ball in the thirty-second minute, squaring the ball to Pelikan upon entering the penalty area. Pelikan flicked the ball up to beat a man, but the Cannons had his shot covered and cleared the ball briefly. Pelikan was fouled just outside the penalty area on the right a minute later, Visevic putting the free-kick wide of the post.

MacNicol stole the ball off Iosifidis with eight minutes remaining in the first half, playing a quick one-two with Nilo before being brought down twenty yards out near the right corner of the penalty area. Damianos played the free kick to the far post where a diving Masi was unable to connect with a header.

In a busy end to the half, Cagalj claimed an inswinging Damianos corner on his line with two minutes remaining. Pelikan had a fresh air swing at a cross from the left as injury time commenced before failing to get to a cross from Kiratzoglu following some good build up play from Visevic and Elvin. When the half time whistle was blown, the score was still locked at 0-0 with the Knights having built up more momentum.

The second half was seven minutes old when the first threat on goal arrived, Pelikan going down on the edge of the area after a string run through the middle but having his appeal for a foul dismissed by the referee. Cagalj saved a cross some shot by Panopoulos as the action intensified. Spiteri was booked in the fifty-sixth minute for a fould on Sam Poutakidis. A minute later Spiteri struck the post with a shot from the top of the box after Pelikan and Visevic had combined to release Ivan Franjic who crossed from the right.

Pelikan was in the thick of the action, finding Elvin with a pass deep into the box, the former Frankston Pines man having his shot saved by Turnbull from a tight angle. Four minutes later Pelikan found Spiteri, who crossed for Visevic who had a header cleared away. With the Knights on top, Stuart Munro turned to his bench and brought on Con Boutsianis in place of Panopoulos. Visevic played a ball out to Cameron Watson, and received a cross back from him which Poutakidis had to head away for a corner. Visevic dispossessed Stergiopoulos on the line just wide of the post shortly after, but was unable to find the room to get a shot away. Three minutes later Visevic made way for Mate Dugandzic as Chris Taylor looked for the spark that would get the vital goal.

In the seventy-fifth minute the goal finally came. Spiteri got the ball on the left in the middle of the park, finding Dugandzic who then released Pelikan. They ran at the Cannons defence together, before Pelikan reached the box and beat Turnbull with a shot across the goal and inside at the far post.

The lead should have been doubled a minute later, Dugandzic put clean through up the middle of the park, but being held up by Turnbull as he tried to round the goalkeeper when he may have been better placed taking a shot. Stergiopoulos recovered to make a saving tackle and through Dugandzic won the ball back again, his efforts to get another sight on goal were thwarted.

Oakleigh skipper Rosman was booked in the seventy-ninth minute for a foul on Dugandzic. From the free kick Pelikan forced a low save from Turnbull before Oakleigh made a double substitution as a last roll of the dice.

With three minutes left in normal time, Kiratzoglu forced a great save from Turnbull after a corner kick. Rosman scuffed a shot wide from thirty yards as Oakleigh desperately pushed men forward. As the Cannons applied pressure to the Knights goal late on, Nilo was downed just outside the box as regular time came to an end. Matthew Grbesa was shown a red card for the challenge. Dead ball specialist Boutsianis brought the best out of Knights keeper Cagalj with his strike, an outstretched hand seeing the ball over the crossbar. From the resulting corner Rosman punching the ball back to the penalty spot as it sailed over his head at the far post, resulting in his second booking and dismissal.

The drama was not yet over, with Varesa Toma finding Boutsianis on the left in the ninety-sixth minute, the shot again well saved by Cagalj. The game finally ended with the Knights deserving 1-0 winners, and with the attacking threat of Pelikan, Visevic and Dugandzic being capable of going further in the Finals series.

Man of the Match:
Anthony Pelikan
(Melbourne Knights)

Melbourne Knights: Cagalj, Iosifidis, Milardovic, Grbesa, Spiteri, Watson, Visevic (Dugandzic 74'), Elvin, Franjic, Kiratzoglu, Pelikan (Piorkowski 83').

Goal: Pelikan 75'

Yellow Cards: Iosifidis 15' Spiteri 56'

Red Card: Grbesa 92'

Oakleigh Cannons: Turnbull, Stergioupolus, Rosman, MacNicol (Cardozo 80'), Panopoulos (Boutsianis 66'), Nilo (Toma 80'), Masi, Damianos, Kovacic, Poutakidis, Webster.

Yellow Cards: Kovacic, Rosman 79'

The Melbourne Knights keep their season alive with a well deserved 1-0 victory over Oakleigh Cannons. The Knights are now one game away from securing a Grand Final date with Whittlesea.

By James Taylor

HODGSON HITS THE HIGHWAY

Dougie dumped by Eagles after winning 8-0!

The Foxtel Cup may well have concluded with its regular home and away season, but that hasn't stopped the VPL from adding to the coaching casualty list for season 2007.

Dougie Hodgson became the eiggth coach to go this year when he was informed that his services would no longer be required at Richmond Eagles - one day after his side defeated Sunshine Georgies 8-0 in the final match of the campaign to save the club from relegation to the State League Division One.

It's the second time this season Hodgson has parted ways with a club in the VPL after earlier in the season he left Heidelberg United, supposedly due to a pay dispute. This time around he was informed by a phone call from Helmet Kalitzki, just as the Eagles President was about to embark on a flight to Russia and Scandanavia last Monday.

Speaking exclusively to Goal! Weekly during the week, the former Sheffield United professional didn't hold back in stating what was on his mind and took a swipe at the credibility and the organisation of the league and Richmond.

"Since coming back from the UK, nothing in this league amazes me anymore and it could only happen in Melbourne. You win 8-0 and pick up a side that's not your side during the course of the season, and then you're shown the door without been given a reason."

An upset Hodgson also hinted of interference from beyond the boundaries of the field when discussing some of the problems he faced at Kevin Bartlett Reserve, saying, "Parents, and they'll know who I'm talking about, didn't help with the situation when they blatantly barracked for the opposition from the sidelines because their son wasn't selected to play in the starting line-up. It was disappointing to see some vocal people on the sidelines voicing an opinion when they were obviously not in a situation to understand the ins and outs of our predicament."

He added, "It's a shame really and I'm at a stage now where I'm contemplating walking away from game in Victoria due to this latest episode.

I'll sit down with the wife and weigh up my options. I'm at the stage where I'm asking myself if I really want to be bothered with it anymore. I've had a few people contact me from overseas, enquiring about my availability, but at this stage I'll be happy to spend time with the family before considering anything in the short term."

Asked which clubs have contacted him from abroad, Hodgson mentioned that former Oldham Athletic team-mate Andy Ritchie, who's now in charge of Huddersfield Town had made some calls to him during the week. The other clubs were Blackburn Rovers and Notts County.

"If I couldn't coach, didn't know the game and I had an honest reason why I got the sack, then I'd say fair enough. I achieved what we had to do and kept the team up – I don't think Arsene Wenger could have done what we done considering the circumstances."

Dougie Hodsgon and his assistant Stan Webster, seen here after Richmond defeated fellow relegation candidate Sunshine Georgies 8-0 on the last game of the season, has since been sacked by the Eagles.

Asked to elaborate, Hodgson cited that he the squad was heavily depleted with injuries and the unavailability of certain players almost certainly had an effect on the team's performance during the second half of the season.

Hodgson points to the fact that as the club headed towards the business end of the season midfielder Brendan Beni left for Spain, Jesse Krncevic embarked on trials in Belgium and Holland - after scoring 4 goals in 5 games, Henry Fa'arodo was away on international duty with the Solomon Islands whilst the return of the exciting Joey Di Iorio from a broken wrist couldn't come quick enough.

Hodgson also said he found it very frustrating working within some of the VPL club systems after being involved in football at a professional level, and referred to the sacking of Andy O'Dell at Coburg United earlier this year as a prime example. O'Dell was sacked from the promotion chasing Division One outfit when it was perched in the top two and succumbed to successive defeats, before being replaced by Joe Montemurro. "There's a danger that football in this state will lose good people if the clubs keep doing what they're doing. Clubs have to realise that one doesn't become a bad coach overnight, and the smart ones will walk away from the game because of the ineptness of certain people who are in charge behind the scenes."

Goal! Weekly contacted Richmond for comment, but with Kalitzki in Europe, an official explanation could not be attained from anyone at the club.

We understand the process to interview potential candidates has already begun, with Western Suburbs coach Mike Chatzitrifonas apparently among those on the short list.

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THE SECRET TO SUCCESS

Hard work off the field pays dividends on the pitch for Whittlesea

To run a successful football organisation, you need two main ingredients, and lots of continual individual efforts from a community or group.

The two main highlights of the operations of the Whittlesea Zebras football club this season are the presence of :

1) A good administration, coordinated and represented by President Sam Cuteri and
2) A good football structure, coordinated and represented by Football Operations Manager Joe Sala.

The football operations structure this year at the Whittlesea Zebras has been drafted and set up from a professional within the herd. The credit of the senior's team success off the park, must be given to none other than the inspirational Joe Sala in 2007. He has established and maintained a structure, which has flourished for all to see.

Mr Sala (pictured with club President Sam Cuteri), is undoubtedly the best football administrator in the league, second to none. Joe's leadership off the field, has assisted the Whittlesea Zebras to command a respect from other league clubs. His style of management is a credit to the Whittlesea Zebras and highlights the core values of this football organisation - "Audentia - Honestus - Progressus".

Joe continually demonstrates these values, and inspires others to replicate them in all arenas; at junior and at men's and woman's senior level. He draws on his extensive administrative and footballing experiences and continually reminds us all not to forget and to respect the history and contribution of past club administrators, players and their achievements; as they are the backbone of future successes still unimaginable.

Whittlesea Zebras member Mr Joe Sala (right) with club President Mr Sam Cuteri

Joe exerts a friendly and controlled aggression toward the successful running of this organisation. He does not accept mediocrity. and surrounds himself with those who have achieved or want to achieve great feats. The man lives and breathes success and his passion for the direction of the Whittlesea Zebras is clear. He asks for togetherness within the community, showing high levels of integrity, and has based his beliefs centred around the good of football and now representing the Shire of Whittlesea with the public interest at the forefront of his thoughts.

From a football team perspective, Mr Sala at the start of the season was faced with adversity, as the Zebras lost key long term players through injury and retirement. Premiership winning, ten year Zebras players in Michael Mazzini, Dean Tartaglia and Damien Guglielmi and two time VPL Gold Medal Winner Chris Emsovski finished off with the Zebras after 2006. Other players to leave the club were ex-Melbourne Victory representative Ricky Diaco, goal keeper Tomas Kovar, 2006 Top goal scorer Ben Harbinson, attacking play-maker Billy Celeski to the A-League and most recently head coach Michael Michaelakopoulos. Ex Victorian State Captain Stel Drakos was also on the long term injury list, and was not expected back until late in the season.

The football community had written off Whittlesea as a title contender, in fact the side was linked with relegation due to the magnitude of changes in the ranks. However someone forgot to tell the players, driven by the football operations manager, about these facts. Joe took these issues in his stride and the club recruited wisely in ex-Zebra championship midfielder Josip Kozic, the experienced ex- Heidelberg captain and stalwart Eric Vasiliadis, Adelaide United representative and 2007 best and fairest winner, Kristian Rees and a goal scoring sensation from the lower leagues, Tex Apostolikas, who recently jointly won the clubs top goal scoring award this season.

On top of recruiting quality, Joe promoted youngsters raring for opportunity. Goalkeeper Ken Gerochristodoulou was promoted to the front line and Joe's department coordinated opportunities to teenagers James Sherman, Mark Pistanizzi and Luca Santilli, just to name a few. Joe was also instrumental in securing 6 time VPL championship winning coach, and ex-Socceroo Peter Ollerton, back to the club that he won a championship with in 2004. To date, Peter who accepted the coaching role on the 10th July 2007, is still undefeated as coach this season. Joe's foresight in obtaining Peter was based on these facts - an individual who has been successful as a player and coach at domestic and international level, who demands respect and gets the best out of his playing group to play for the shirt and the community; traits Joe wants the current generation of the Whittlesea Zebras to embrace.

The team still has a big job ahead of them, but a win on the week-end at Epping Stadium against the Preston Lions will set up a Grand Final berth, befitting of the off field effort shown by Joe, the football department and his recruitment staff.

NIGHT OF EARNT STRIPES

The Whittlesea Zebras held its presentation night last weekend and gave some players possibly their first taste of silverware for 2007. The Zebras hit some fine form in the second half of the season culminating in its first Grand Final appearance since 2004.

The 2007 squad poses for the camera. Will they be smiling come October 7th?

Peter Ollerton with the joint winners of Top Goal Scoring award with 6 goals each, Hamlet Armenian (left) and Tex Apostalikas.

Best and Fairest winner Kristian Rees (left) with Runner-Up Ken Gerochristodoulou.

BRIGHT FUTURE AWAITS CAVALIERS

Under the guidance of former NSL player, Don McLaren, Green Gully's U/14's won its Super League for 2007 and remain undefeated for almost two entire seasons.

Green Gully Under 14 Super League team performed a rare feat last Sunday in winning the FFV NW/SE Super League playoff.

In beating Mornington 1-0, Gully went through the league season winning every game culminating in Sunday's final. The team backs up their efforts in 2006 when they won the Under 13 playoff. Gully lost the opening game that year, and haven't been defeated since.

Coach Donald Maclaren said he was proud of the boys and the football they played during the year. "It's been a tough year" he said. " disruptions to training with the drought and conditions of the grounds has made it hard not just for us, but for every team. We've also had a number of players doubling up their work load with Victorian duties so at times we've had some very tired boys on the park, but they've stood up terrifically well" he said. "Particularly when every team we played this year was really up for us and prepared to get stuck in"

Sunday's game against a depleted Mornington proved to be a thriller with both sides playing good football despite the blustery conditions. After the break with both teams nil all, Jamie Maclaren's winner with about 15 minutes to go was enough to clinch it for Gully, despite some heart stopping minutes when Mornington through everything at them. With both teams fielding a number of players from Victorian Metro and Country squads, the game was a fitting finale between the teams who clearly the best in their respective leagues this year.

Green Gully SOCCER CLUB

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ON LARGE FLAT SCREEN

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Saturday 6th October	vs	Sydney 7.00pm
Friday 12th October	vs	Adelaide United 7.30pm
Friday 16th November	vs	Queensland 7.00pm
Monday 31st December	vs	Central Coast 6.00pm

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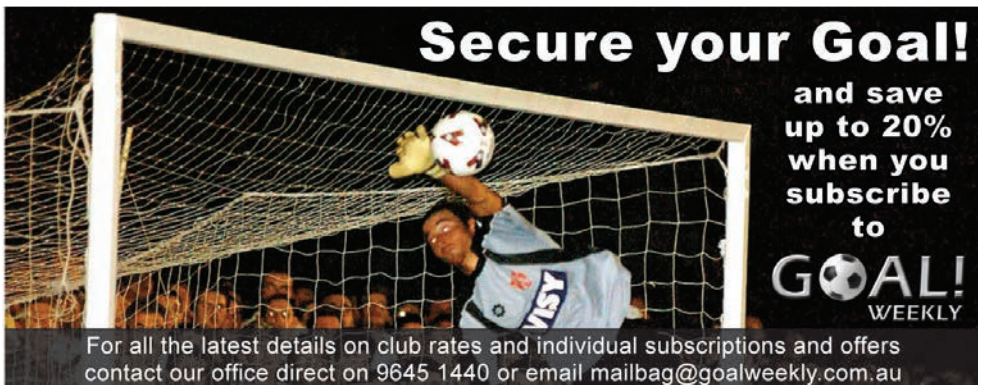


International Soccer Coaching

With Soccerroo Legend Eddie Krncevic

For a very long time youth soccer players in Geelong have been deprived of high quality coaching and development, forcing a vast number of players to travel to various destinations of Melbourne on a regular basis to receive such coaching.

The above will be changing in the near future with the introduction of the "International Institute of Football".
The institute intends to set up an all year round program here in Geelong, which will be unique for Australian standards.

The program will cater for both boys and girls between the ages of 10 to 17 and will be offered to players of all standards and ability. (Elite) and (Development)
The program will comprise of 4 x 10 weeks semesters and will commence later in 2007.

The instructors are of the highest caliber with National and International coaching experience and will include coaches such as former Australian International Eddie Krncevic.

The Football (soccer) players of Geelong will have the opportunity to experience the future program in a 2 day camp, which will be an introduction of what's to come once the program commences.
The 2 day camp will include various facets of the game including technical skills and techniques used at leading academies around the world.

Don't miss out on a once in a life time opportunity to be coached in a true professional environment.

Eddie Krncevic

DETAILS

Date:	Saturday 20th October & Sunday 21st October
Time:	9.30am to 1.30pm both days
Venue:	Elcho Park - Gibbons Road Lara (North Geelong Soccer Club Grounds)
Payment:	$100.00 per player, cost covers both days. Payment can be sent with your enrolment form or paid on the morning of the first day on the camp. Payment will only be accepted in cash or cash cheque or money order.
On the day:	You must register and make payment between 8.00am and 9.00am on the first day of the camp.
Enrolment:	Forms must be filled in and recieved no later than Wednesday the 12th of September. Forms received following thiis day will not be accepted due to the requirement to finalise participaton numbers.

Name : _____
D.O.B. _____
Address: _____
Home Phone: _____
Email Address: _____
Payment with enrolment from ( ) or on the day ( ) please tick
Parent Name : _____

T: 9645 1440 F: 9645 1305
E: news@goalweekly.com
Please cut out enrolment form and send it to
INTERNATIONAL SOCCER CAMP
PO BOX 142 PORT MELBOURNE 3207

YOUNG GUNS DRIVE HAS WENGER PURRING

Arsene Wenger believes the determination of his young side to become successful is the driving force behind their early season surge to the top of the Premier League.

The Gunners ensured they stayed top of the table with an emphatic 5-0 demolition of Derby at the Emirates Stadium on Saturday, Emmanuel Adebayor scoring a hat-trick and Abou Diaby and Cesc Fabregas also finding the net.

The Gunners are now unbeaten in nine matches in all competitions this season and the Arsenal manager is delighted with the mindset of his players.

"We had a difficult Champions League game in midweek but even when it looked to have become easy against Derby we kept our concentration on the quality of our game," brimmed the Frenchman.

"That is enjoyable to watch. The players kept a good collective game and they mean business. They are not there to show off. They want to achieve something together."

Derby found it difficult to compete, and found themselves a goal behind within ten minutes as Abou Diaby unleashed an unstoppable 20 yard drive into the top corner of the net after evading two ineffective challenges.

The Frenchman came close again soon after, before Adebayor scored his first of the afternoon on 25 minutes as he took the ball past visiting goalkeeper Stephen Bywater.

A match like this can affect the confidence of sides like Derby, and manager Billy Davies will hope the second half has not damaged morale within his ranks.

Adebayor scored again on 49 minutes, this time from the penalty spot, after Matt Oakley pulled back Eduardo.

And Spanish international Fabregas, who is in terrific form, scored goal number four with 20 minutes remaining.

Adebayor completed a hat-trick - the first of his Arsenal career - in the 79th minute after great control on the edge of the area.

Fabregas is the player on everybody's lips in north London at the moment. His strike here was his seventh of the season, but Wenger is not worried about him developing an ego problem.

Arsenal showed why they are the early Premier League leaders as they eased past Derby County 5-0 at the Emirates Stadium in emphatic style.

"Naturally, he is very hard on himself," Wenger explained. "He is very demanding and has his feet on the ground.

"His form shows the psychological boost you get when you are scoring goals."

Derby manager Davies is adamant that their poor record on their travels will not have an impact on whether they beat relegation this campaign, despite the fact they had lost 4-0 at Tottenham and 6-0 at Liverpool before this defeat.

They have managed to collect four points so far, and face Sammy Lee's Bolton side next.

"It is no embarrassment to come here and get taught these lessons," Davies insisted afterwards. "Matches against Bolton, Reading and Fulham are the games where we need to pick up points. At Pride Park we are delighted to play against anyone. Away from home, we will play sides who play in Europe that have so much quality. The gap is enormous, but we are getting better with every match."

Davies also gave special praise to Adebayor, who has taken on the burden of leading the Arsenal attack following the summer departure of Thierry Henry for Barcelona.

"He is a star. Look at his play and his physical presence. He also has fantastic movement and, for me, he is one of the best strikers around."

BENITEZ ROTATION POLICY UNDER FIRE AS REDS DRAW AT HOME

Rafa Benitez defended his decision to leave club record signing Fernando Torres on the bench after a goalless draw that saw his Liverpool side fall further behind pacesetters Arsenal.

Liverpool were booed off the pitch by their own supporters on Saturday after a desperately poor 0-0 draw with newly-promoted Birmingham raised fresh doubts as to whether Benitez can deliver the title to Anfield.

Having won three of their first four league games to go top of the Premiership, Liverpool have now failed to win - or score - in their last two domestic matches.

Benitez faced fresh questions about his controversial rotation policy as Spanish striker Torres was kept on the bench for an hour before being introduced to the action.

The Liverpool manager instead opted to use Dirk Kuyt and Andriy Voronin before sending on Torres who went close to sealing the points in the closing stages with a spectacular overhead kick.

Benitez said: "I have four strikers and I need to use two of them. We knew Birmingham would play deep and I took the decision to play Voronin and Kuyt.

"Of course it's frustrating that we haven't won, but Birmingham worked hard and defended well."

Birmingham boss Steve Bruce produced a diplomatic response when asked whether he would have kept Torres on the bench if he was in possession of a striker of his repute.

The former Manchester United defender said: "Who am I to argue with Rafa Benitez after all that he has achieved?"

Benitez admitted his side ran out of ideas towards the end of a dreadful game in which Jermaine Pennant damaged his hamstring against his former club.

According to Benitez, the injury is not serious although Pennant is unlikely to be risked on Tuesday when Liverpool face Reading away in the third round of the Carling Cup.

Benitez added: "We didn't have space or any clear ideas at the end. In this kind of game you must win the second ball.

"We had some chances, but we couldn't score. Am I worried about us not scoring? Yes.

Steven Gerrard (R) of Liverpool vies with Johan Djourou of Birmingham City during the Premier league football match at Anfield in Liverpool. The match ended in a 0-0 draw.

But we could have scored very early on and then it would have been different.

"But you have to take your chances. I'm frustrated, but we must keep going."

Birmingham are fast becoming Liverpool's bogey team after emerging undefeated for the third successive time at Anfield.

Bruce was delighted with the way his side shut out the opposition although their joy was tainted by the news that Borja Oubina is likely to be out for the rest of the season after rupturing cruciate ligaments.

The Birmingham manager said: "I've always loved coming to Anfield. It's the place to be.

"No disrespect to the Championship, but we were playing at places like Colchester this time last season and we missed coming to places steeped in history.

"Liverpool did give us our biggest hiding 18 months ago, but I think the only serious save Maik Taylor had to make this time was from Andriy Voronin.

"If we had had a bit more cutting edge up front then we might just have nicked something.

"My players stuck to the game plan and executed it well."

MILAN SUFFER ANOTHER SERIE A STUMBLE

AC Milan continued their early season stumble through Serie A with a disappointing 1-1 draw at home to Parma on Saturday.

Milan were targeting the win that would have hoisted them up to second place behind league leaders Roma and ahead of Inter Milan, Napoli and Juventus - all of whom play on Sunday.

Clarence Seedorf opener the scoring for Carlo Ancelotti's side in the 44th minute, but the curse of the late equaliser struck the European champions once again when Andrea Pisanu levelled in the 73rd minute.

Milan now boast an unenvious three draws from four league games so far.

It took a late equaliser from Alessandro Nesta last week away to Siena to rescue a point, and the week before Fiorentina claimed a share of the points at the San Siro.

Ancelotti's side remain in sixth position, three points behind Roma who will look to maintain their impressive defensive record in Sunday's match of the day against Juventus at the Olympic stadium.

AC Milan´s forward Filippo Inzaghi (C) heads the ball during their Seria A match between AC Milan and Parma at San Siro Stadium in Milan, Italy. The match ended in a 1-1 draw.

Roma have won all three of their games, scoring seven goals and conceding none so far but that statistic could be tested to the full by the Turin-based side, who have scored eight goals in three matches.

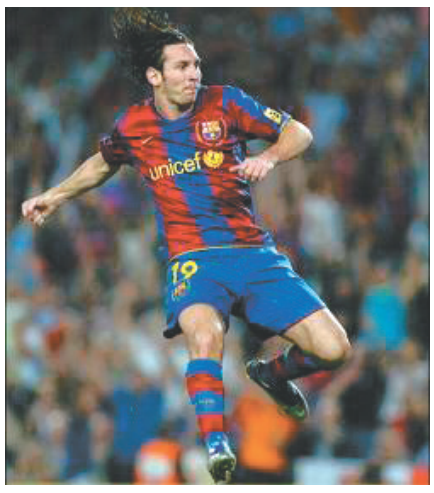
Earlier Saturday Udinese gave their early season hopes a boost with a 2-0 win over Reggina, courtesy of brace in the sixth and 62nd minutes from Antonio Di Natale.

MESSI ENSURES PERFECT NOU CAMP ANNIVERSARY

Barcelona celebrated the 50th anniversary of their Camp Nou Stadium on Saturday and Argentine sensation Lionel Messi ensured the party continued all night scoring twice to sink title rivals Sevilla 2-1.

Sevilla looked set to spoil the Camp Nou party but Messi scored his first goal of the season in the 73rd minute and then converted a penalty six minutes later to push Barcelona up to second in the table, just one point behind leaders Real Madrid, who have a game in hand.

The victory was welcome relief for Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard who has come under mounting pressure after an indifferent start to the season with speculation that Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho, who left Chelsea this week, is being lined up as his successor.



For Sevilla the defeat, which ends their perfect start to the season, capped a miserable week for the southern coast side who were outclassed 3-0 by Arsenal in their midweek Champions League match.

The match started with a spectacular ceremony to mark the 50th birthday of the fantastic Camp Nou arena and Barcelona fans expected goals after watching their team fail to score in two out of their first three league matches.

Brazilian Ronaldinho, who has been accused in the Spanish press of partying at nightclubs before big games, was missing with a reported calf injury persuading Rijkaard to start with just two forwards.

Boosted by their 3-0 Champions League win over Lyon in midweek Barcelona attacked from the off and Thierry Henry almost scored his first league goal in the fourth minute after a great cut-back from Andres Iniesta.

Sevilla also threw caution to the wind in a pulsating opening and Renato thumped a header against the post in the 20th minute to give the hosts a warning.

Eric Abidal then forced a fine save from Sevilla goalkeeper Andres Palop who was then almost beaten by a fierce swerving shot from Deco that whistled past the post.

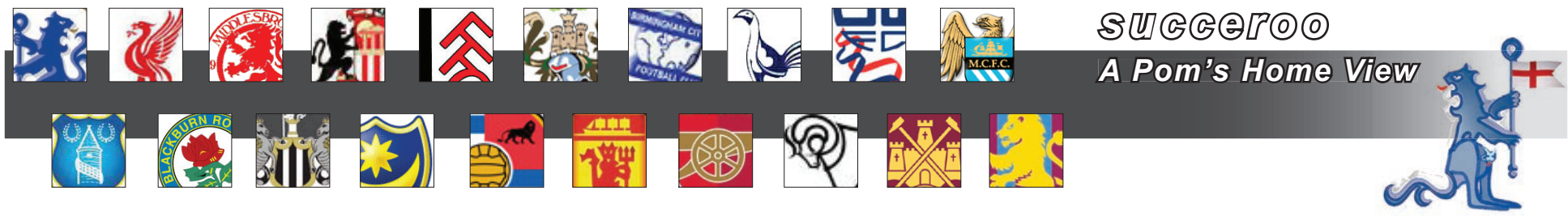
Barcelona introduced teenage sensation Giovani, recently-capped by Mexico, on the hour mark but it was the 20-year-old Messi who made the breakthrough on 73 minutes rifling in a left-footed volley.

Sevilla were shocked and Danish midfielder Christian Poulsen did their cause little good when he fouled substitute Giovani in the penalty area six minutes later.

Messi converted with aplomb and the goal proved crucial, with Frederic Kanoute pulling a goal back for Sevilla in the dying seconds.

Barcelona are now just one point behind Real who travel to Valladolid on Sunday.

By Richard Sucksmith



THE PREMIERSHIP MOURNS MOURINHO

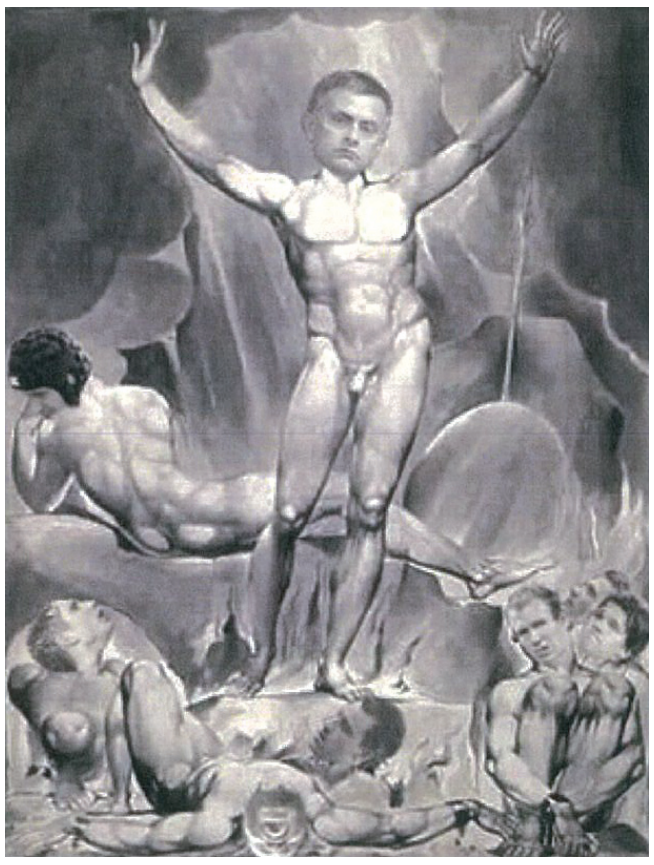
Jose Mourinho has astonishingly called time on his three trophy-laden years as Chelsea's manager by severing his ties with the club.

Differences with Roman Abramovich have re-emerged so strongly that they have forced him into leaving. Chelsea's last two Premier League games ended in a defeat at Aston Villa and a 0-0 draw at home to Blackburn Rovers, leaving them fifth in the table. Meanwhile, Tuesday's disappointing draw with Rosenborg Trondheim in the Champions League was watched by only 25,000 fans.

After making an emotional farewell to the players at the training ground he then agreed a severance package of around £20m for the remaining three years of his contract. During his tenure, Mourinho made Chelsea a 'love them or hate them team', but he did an amazing job and will be remembered as their most successful manager in the club's history. Mourinho has always been a practical manager, putting emphasis more on results than producing 'sexy-football'. But, Abramovich had expected a more attractive game and had remained deeply frustrated by Chelsea's inability to secure a first European Cup.

He has been replaced by Avram Grant as Chelsea manager although it is believed that this will not be a long term solution. Manchester City boss Sven-Goran Eriksson is a friend of Grant's and backed him to make the step up to the manager's position. Fortunately for Chelsea, Eriksson has a job and I'm sure most Chelsea fans will be relieved that he is not a candidate to replace the 'Special One'.

The most likely candidate for a permanent replacement will be the current Russia manager Guus Hiddink. He's already on Abramovich's payroll, but is unlikely to be available until Russia are out of the competition at the Euros in 2008. This could happen when England face them in Russia in October. Another possible candidate is the current Portuguese national manager, the Brazilian Luiz Felipe Scolari. Mourinho has already been linked to the Portuguese national team who are struggling to qualify for Euro 2008. Scolari has just been banned by Uefa for the remaining four matches of the campaign for his behaviour, when he stomped on to the pitch and threw a punch at a player.



Jose leaves a team grieving for the loss of the 'special one'

English football will miss Jose, and while Spurs will offer the world to entice him to North London, I think it will be a few years before he returns. Possibly as Sir Alex's replacement at Manchester United or possibly even leading England to the next world cup!

This Week's Round Up

The Premiership's top guns Arsenal became top of their group with a confident and comfortable win over Sevilla. Cesc Fabregas put Arsenal ahead at the break, then Robin van Persie and Eduardo sealed the points for a 3-0 win.

Cristiano Ronaldo scored against his former club Sporting Lisbon as Manchester United's Champions League campaign started with a 1-0 victory. While the Portuguese debutants showed they were not daunted by the occasion it was United's night with Wayne Rooney making a quiet comeback after recovering from a broken foot sustained in the opening Premier League fixture against Reading.

Liverpool escaped embarrassment with a fortunate draw after a poor display away to Porto. Dirk Kuyt pulled Liverpool level with a close-range header after the Reds had given away a penalty and after only eight minutes. But Liverpool were happy to take a point, as they had to play with 10 men for over 30 minutes of the second half after Jermaine Pennant was sent off after picking up a second yellow card.

Meanwhile in the UEFA cup, Tottenham cruised to a 7-1 victory over Anorthosis Famagusta in the first round first leg. Spurs have had a miserable time of it in the early stages of the season, and their impressive win will help cement the future of manager Martin Jol.

Blackburn's hopes of reaching the group stage of the Uefa Cup suffered a hammer blow as they lost their first leg tie against Larissa 2-0. It means that Blackburn will have it all to do when they entertain the Greek Cup winners at Ewood Park in two weeks' time.

Chant of the week

"Oh you can freeze 500 million, and you can freeze 500 more, Cos Thaksin's got another billion underneath his bedroom floor, SHIN-A-WATRA SHIN-A-WATRA!"

Chant of the season so far, from Man City fans to the tune of The Proclaimers' "500 miles".

Gossip

Chelsea's Didier Drogba has vowed to follow Jose out of Chelsea. (The Sun)

Meanwhile, midfielder Frank Lampard is said to "devastated" by the departure and is also set to leave... along with Michael Essien, Florent Malouda and Ricardo Carvalho. (Various)

Spurs are believed to be keen to make a move for Mourinho if there is any suggestion he is interested. (Express)

Striker Michael Owen will be fit for England's two Euro 2008 qualifiers in October, despite fears over his niggling groin strain. (Various)

Tottenham will review the position of manager Martin Jol during the next international break in October. (Daily Express)

Derby boss Billy Davies believes his team's win over Newcastle on Monday will help to ensure he is not the first managerial casualty of the Premier League season. (Daily Mirror)

Birmingham chairman David Gold claims Premier League fans are being treated like "mushrooms" by greedy chairmen. He believes they are "kept in the dark and fed manure". (The Sun)

Quotes of the week

"There's more chance of me flying Concorde to the moon blindfolded than there is of you taking Wales to the World Cup."
What Robbie Savage reportedly told Wales manager John Toshack. At least he's not bitter.

"Not what Northern Ireland wanted. Nigel Worthington had targeted at least four points from this match."
No wonder Northern Ireland struggled in Latvia when set a task like that!

"He's blown his whistle more times than a drunken raver!"
One of the pundits on Final score about the Wigan v Newcastle game.

"They'll be all right. They'll be safe."
Roy Keane when asked about Man U's prospects for the season.

"Peter Crouch has such a great touch he could bring down a shot put."
Clive Tyldesley - Liverpool v Toulouse second leg.

Image by Guardian Unlimited.
All facts and fictions borrowed from the following websites: www.bbc.co.uk/ www.premierleague.com/ www.sundaymirror.co.uk/ www.express.co.uk/ www.dailymail.co.uk/ www.mirror.co.uk/ www.dailystar.co.uk/ www.telegraph.co.uk/ www.guardian.co.uk/ www.independent.co.uk/ www.thesun.co.uk/ www.timesonline.co.uk/ www.dailyrecord.co.uk/ www.newsoftheworld.co.uk/

WELLINGTON PHOENIX

2 - 2

ADELAIDE UNITED

Courtesy FFA

SMELTZ TO THE RESCUE FOR WELLINGTON

Phoenix and Adelaide in nailbiter

Wellington Phoenix and Adelaide United both pressed but neither folded in a pulsating Hyundai A-League match that ended in a 2-2 draw at Westpac Stadium in Wellington on Saturday night.

Before a 12,127-strong crowd and played in clear, calm conditions, the fifth round encounter really came to life in the second half after a scoreless first 45 minutes.

Goals from Diego in the 69th and Bruce Djite in the 78th minutes cancelled out Felipe's 64th minute header that had given Phoenix the lead.

But Phoenix striker Shane Smeltz's late glancing header ensured the competition points were shared.

The result leaves Phoenix winless at home after three outings at Westpac Stadium, having secured its first win away against Sydney FC last week.

But, on the balance of the match, Adelaide – still to register a win this season - would have felt hard done by not to take at least one point from Wellington.

Adelaide had the better of a scoreless first half, dominating possession and pressing deep inside the Phoenix half. But for some fine goalkeeping by Phoenix custodian Glen Moss the home side could have found itself trailing at the break – the visitors creating the greater attacking chances.

In contrast Adelaide goalkeeper Robert Bajic did not have to save a shot on goal in the first 45 minutes.

Moss was called into action in the 10th minute, diving to save a low free kick by Adelaide midfielder Kristian Sarkies from the edge of the penalty area after Phoenix defender Karl Dodd was adjudged to have fouled striker Djite.

Adelaide Travis Dodd – handed the captaincy armband following the match day withdrawal of Paul Agostino to injury - had a great chance to open the scoring in the 21st minute but his close range, centre field header from a cross by left defender Cassio beat Moss and the crossbar.

Phoenix midfielder Daniel sparked the home side's first real opportunity in the 26th minute when his left foot cross found Felipe in space inside Adelaide's penalty area. Felipe's cross beat Bajic and only just Phoenix striker Smeltz's head in front of goal.

Moments later a thunderous drive from Felipe just went wide of Bajic's right hand post.

Moss was again called into action in the 32nd minute when Adelaide's Nathan Burns headed from close range, forcing the Phoenix goalkeeper to dive low to his left and force the ball away from danger.

Adelaide continued to press early in the second half, Diego forcing Moss to dive as his shot went past his right hand post. Moments later Dodd missed with a clear header from close range after Cassio delivered a perfect cross.

Diego came closest to breaking the deadlock on the hour when his strike from just outside the penalty area beat Moss but not the goalkeeper's right hand post.

However, it was Phoenix that took the lead in the 64th minute when a right hand cross by Jeremy Christie found Felipe who headed between two Adelaide defenders over Bajic and into the goal.

Adelaide levelled five minutes later when Djite's close range header from a corner came off Moss' left hand goalpost and into the path of Diego who reacted quickest to head the ball home.

Burns saved Adelaide moments later when he headed an inswinging corner off the goal line with Bajic beaten.

Djite gave the visitors the lead in the 78th minute when a right hand cross into the penalty area from Burns was collected by Djite in centre field who turned and placed the ball easily beyond Moss.

Phoenix striker Smeltz forced the equaliser in the 87th minute - and left honours for the match shared - when his glancing header from a Tony Lochhead cross beat a rushing Bajic.

Wellington Phoenix: 20.Glen MOSS (gk), 2.Jeremy CHRISTIE, 3.Tony LOCHHEAD, 5.Karl DODD, 7.Ross ALOISI (captain), 9.Shane SMELTZ, 10.Michael FERRANTE, 11.DANIEL, 12.Richard JOHNSON (8.Vaughan COVENY 86'), 14.Steven O'DOR, 21.Felipe (15.George PALADINI 86').
Substitutes Not Used: 1.Mark PASTON (gk), 13.Steven OLD.
Yellow Cards: Ross Aloisi 88'.
Red Cards: Nil.

Adelaide United: 20.Robert BAJIC (gk), 2.Richie ALAGICH (17.Isyan ERDOGAN 74'), 4.Angelo COSTANZO, 6.CASSIO, 8. Kristian SARKIES (7.Lucas PANTELIS 70'),10.Nathan BURNS, 11.Bruce DJITE, 13.Travis DODD (Captain), 15.Jonas SALLEY, 18.Robert CORNTHWAITE 22.DIEGO.
Substitutes Not Used: 1.Daniel BELTRAME (gk), 21. Jason SPAGNUOLO.
Yellow Cards: Nil
Red Cards: Nil

CENTRAL COAST MARINERS

1 - 0

PERTH GLORY

Courtesy Mariners FC

LATE PETROVSKI STRIKE SINKS GLORY

Mariners extends lead at the top to three points

The Central Coast Mariners have maintained their place at the top of the Hyundai A-League with a solid 1-0 win over the Perth Glory in an eventful round five clash at Bluetongue Central Coast Stadium on Sunday evening.

Sasho Petrovski, who had en effervescent game in attack, scored the winner 10 minutes from full-time after it appeared the game would end in a 0-0 stalemate with neither side having a clear ascendancy or creating definitive goal-scoring chances.

The result sees the Mariners maintain their unbeaten start to the season and go four points clear at the top, while Perth slumps to last place with just three scoreless draws to its credit.

The Mariners went into the match without in-form striker Nik Mrdja but with talisman Damian Mori, who had been signed to the club on a short-term injury contract, stepping in to partner Petrovski up front.

But it was the Glory who had the better of the early chances and they missed a golden opportunity in the eighth minute when Mitchell Prentice swung a free-kick into the Mariners box only for Jordan Simpson to volley over the bar from just six yards out.

The Mariners had their fist real opportunity in the 20th minute when Nigel Boogaard lobbed his volley from a corner just inches over the bar.

Just two minutes later, Mori should have opened the scoring when he mistimed his shot from point-blank range after Petrovski found him with a deft pass from the edge of the area.

The home side managed to wrestle control of the match, and Adam Kwasnik was allowed a couple of chances towards the end of the half, a header that went over the bar and a full-blooded drive that was well saved by Glory glovesman Tom Tomich to leave the teams locked 0-0 at half-time.

The Mariners hit the ground running in the second half with Petrovski narrowly missing with two bullet-like strikes from just outside the area in the space of two minutes and fullback Dean Heffernan emerging as a real threat down the left flank.

The Glory went agonisingly close to breaking the deadlock in the 67th minute when James Robinson headed David Micevski's pin-point cross past Danny Vukovic in the Mariners goal only to see his shot rattle off the crossbar.

The Mariners deservedly went in front in the 80th minute when Kwasnik took a quick free kick in midfield to send Petrovski into attack. He slid the ball out to Andre Gumprecht, who tore down the right wing and took the ball to the edge of area before crossing back for Petrovski to side-foot a shot past Tomich for a goal.

Jamie Coyne almost handed the Mariners a second just a few moments later when he put too much pace on a back pass that beat Tomich only to find the side netting.

Gumprecht and Mori had chances to add to the Mariners tally late in the match but couldn't find the back of the net with Petrovski's strike enough to keep the Central Coast well clear at the top of the table.

Central Coast Mariners: 20.Danny VUKOVIC (gk), 7.John HUTCHINSON, 8.Dean HEFFERNAN, 11.Damien BROWN (6.Andre GUMPRECHT 70'), 15.Andrew CLARK, 16.Nigel BOOGAARD, 17.Matthew OSMAN (5.Bradley PORTER 46'), 19.Adam KWASNIK, 22.Sasho PETROVSKI, 23.Mile JEDINAK, 24.Damien MORI.
Substitutes Not Used: 1.Matthew TROTT (gk), 10.Tom PONDELJAK.
Yellow Cards: Dean Heffernan 39', Andrew Clark 43', Sasho Petrovski 90'.
Red Cards: Nil

Perth Glory: 50.Tommi TOMICH (gk), 2.Nikolai TOPOR-STANLEY, 4.Simon COLOSIMO (25. Tyler SIMPSON 46'), 5.Jamie HARNWELL, 6.Dino DJULBIC, 8.David MICEVSKI, 14.Jamie COYNE, 15.Mitchell PRENTICE, 19.Naum SEKULOVSKI (13.Nikita RUKAVYTSYA 72'), 21.James ROBINSON, 24.Jordan SIMPSON (9.Mate DRAGICEVIC 66').
Substitutes Not Used: 30.Tando VELAPHI.
Yellow Cards: Tyler Simpson 53'.
Red Cards: Nil